

IRS POLICY ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The Internal Revenue Service is committed to preventing and eliminating sexual harassment from the workplace. Sexual harassment, whether it is committed by executives, managers, supervisors, employees, or non-employees (i.e., contractors, taxpayers, or visitors to the workplace) is specifically prohibited. Under agency guidelines, all allegations of sexual harassment are dealt with promptly and impartially, and employees who report such incidents do not suffer any form of reprisal or retaliation.

Any employee who engages in improper conduct will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. Supervisors who either condone or fail to act promptly to correct inappropriate conduct brought to their attention will also be subject to disciplinary action.

Over the past several years, IRS has conducted a vigorous campaign to publicize this policy and ensure that all employees feel free and know how to report violations. Each year since 1993, the agency has issued a reminder to every employee about the IRS Policy Against Sexual Harassment. The reminder reviews prohibited behavior and warns that offenders will be held responsible if such behavior occurs. It also outlines the many ways that employees can report problems. For example, in addition to reporting violations through any level of management, employees can contact a special hotline for reporting sexual harassment and can also use the EEO discrimination complaint process.

The IRS has some 100,000 employees subject to this policy. Although it may be impossible in an organization this size to prevent all incidences of sexual harassment, this has been and remains its goal. Data from extensive employee surveys held in 1995 and 1997, as well as records of actual complaints in its EEO system, paint a positive picture of the impact of its Policy. Trend data from the surveys show a significant reduction in the number of employees who responded that they had been subject to sexual harassment of any kind. During the three years 1995-1997, allegations received through the EEO complaint system, the Hotline, and the Inspection Service totaled 476.

The IRS will continue to highlight the prohibition against sexual harassment to bring this number down to zero. Where there appear to be problems, the IRS is committed to taking aggressive action to address those problems.

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